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(707) 645-1888Statement of the Hon. George Miller
Water Conservation and Recycling Roundtable
April 8, 2010

Thank you for the invitation to participate in today's roundtable on water conservation and recycling. I hope that bringing so many stakeholders together today will be the first step in a significantly more aggressive federal and state approach to water recycling and conservation. This is one of the most critical investments we can make in California's economic and environmental future.

It's a very easy equation: the more of these tools we use, the more reliable our water supply becomes.

The 2009 California Water Plan – just like the previous edition – makes it very clear that we can get far more water from recycling than we can from any other single source. Conservation and recycling projects are based on known technology, they involve federal-state-local partnerships, and they can be brought online far more quickly than any other water supply project.

As many of you know, the Bay Area congressional delegation has been working with a growing coalition of water and wastewater agencies around the region to expand our recycled water portfolio. The Bay Area water recycling coalition has invested in water recycling projects that will ultimately supply more than 100,000 acre-feet of sustainable and reliable drought-year yield to the region. Congress has already authorized one set of projects through the original Title XVI legislation and the Bay Area Regional Water Recycling Program Authorization Act, we have another set of project authorizations in the Bay Area Regional Water Recycling Program Expansion Act awaiting Senate action, and there are still more projects in the pipeline after that.

In addition, I have worked with Congressman Jerry McNerney, Congressman Rush Holt of New Jersey, Energy and Commerce Chairman Henry Waxman, and others in Congress to promote water efficiency by codifying the Environmental Protection Agency's WaterSense program through our Water Advanced Technologies for Advanced Resource Use (WATER) Act, which was included in the House-passed American Climate and Energy Security Act. Our legislation also increases federal procurement requirements for water efficiency, and it provides for grants to states, local governments and other entities to offer financial incentives through vouchers or rebates to consumers who purchase and install water-efficient products and services. For states and agencies — like those in California — that have already established water efficiency rebate programs, the amendment provides funding to expand them.

Yet despite the significant investment by local agencies across California, despite Congress' investment of tens of millions of dollars into the Bureau of Reclamation's water recycling program, and despite the funds available through the state bonds and other authorities, the demand for help in this area is still far greater than the resources made available:

- We cannot keep up with the demand for federal authorizations under the Bureau's Title XVI program. In the time it takes us to pass one authorization bill for Bay Area water recycling projects, another half-dozen agencies have signed up with solid proposals that will benefit their customers, the environment, and taxpayers.
- Worse yet, the Bureau of Reclamation's annual budget has historically ignored the demand for water recycling funding in California, let alone the demand West-wide. This year's Bureau budget made some important gains, but we are still facing hundreds of millions of dollars in water recycling backlog, despite the \$126 million that Congress provided in last year's Recovery Act.

Aligning state and federal efforts will be helpful in this effort, and it is critical that the Bureau of Reclamation's regional offices move more quickly to get the money and assistance out into the field. If there are legislative changes necessary to make this happen, I am ready to assist.

Water recycling projects have bipartisan support, and water managers across the state and the West understand how important it is to invest in conservation, efficiency, and reuse in order to keep up with demand in a changing climate.

With increased support and a more coordinated and expedited process that match funding to opportunity, we should see purple pipelines in every city and watershed in the state. I look forward to working with all of the attendees at today's roundtable to make that a reality.